

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L JAKARTA 9984

E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, ID, PO, PT

SUBJ: MALIK ON FUTURE OF PORTUGUESE TIMOR

REF: A) LISBON 3315 B) JAKARTA 6958

BEGIN SUMMARY: FOREIGN MINISTER MALIK TOLD AMBASSADOR AGUST 12 THAT GOI DOES NOT DESIRE MERGER OF PORTUGUESE TIMOR INTO INDONESIA BECAUSE MERGER WOULD CREATE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC PROBLEMS, AND THAT IF PORTUGAL RELINQUISHES CONTROL OVER PT, GOI WOULD PREFER INDEPENDENT TIMOR FOR TIME BEING. MALIK'S COMMENTS CONFLICT WITH OTHER REPORTS THAT GOI SECURITY OFFICIALS, WHO WILL ULTIMATELY DECIDE POLICY, FEAR INDEPENDENT TIMOR COULD BE THREAT TO SECURITY, AND THEREFORE FAVOR MERGER. END SUMMARY.

1. IN RESPONSE TO AMBASSADOR'S COMMENT THAT COMMUNIQUE ISSUED AT END OF WALDHEIM VISIT TO LISBON (REF A) DID NOT MENTION PORTUGAL'S INTENTIONS TOWARD PT, MALIK INDICATED THAT GOI IS UNEASY ABOUT CHANGE OF STATUS OF PT AND HOPES CONFIDENTIAL

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TO "PLAY THE MATTER QUIETLY." HE SAID THE PORTUGUESE

HAD ATTEMPTED TO ARRANGE A MEETING WITH MALIK WHILE HE PASSED THROUGH EUROPE IN JULY ON HIS WAY TO VISIT SEVERAL EASTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES, BUT THAT HIS SCHEDULE DID NOT ALLOW A MEETING.

2. MALIK SAID GOI DOES NOT SEEK MERGER OF PT WITH INDONESIA, AS ONE POLITICAL FACTION IN PT PORPOSED FOLLOWING PORTUGUESE ANNOUNCEMENT THAT FUTURE OF COLONY WILL BE DETERMINED BY REFERENDUM (REF B). HE SAID ACQUISITION OF PORTUGUESE TIMOR WOULD PRESENT UNWANTED ADDITIONAL ECONOMIC BURDEN WHICH GOI CANNOT AFFORD. IT WOULD ALSO RAISE "CONSTITUTIONAL" PROBLEM, HE SAID, APPARENTLY REFERRING TO PROPOSAL OF ONE PRO-MERGER GROUP IN PT THAT THE TERRITORY MERGE WITH INDONESIA IN FEDERAL ASSOCIATION WHICH WOULD BE INCOMPATIBLE WITH INDONESIA'S UNITARY CONSTITUTION.

3. MALIK IMPLIED THAT GOI WOULD PREFER STATUS-QUO IN PT, BUT INDICATED THAT SINCE PORTUGAL'S INTERESTS THERE ARE MODEST, CHANGE IN STATUS IS LIKELY. HE SAID IF CHANGE DOES OCCUR, INDONESIA WOULD PREFER AN INDEPENDENT STATE. QUESTION OF MERGER INTO INDONESIA COULD BE CONSIDERED LATER, PERHAPS IN FIVE YEARS, HE SAID, IF THE INHABITANTS AT THAT TIME SHOULD WISH TO JOIN INDONESIA. MALIK SAID THAT IN ORDER TO ACCOMPLISH INDEPENDENT STATUS UNDER GOVERNMENT ACCEPTABLE TO INDONESIA, COMPETING POLITICAL FACTIONS IN PT WOULD HAVE TO BE UNITED AND PRO-MERGER GROUP RESTRAINED.

4. IN RESPONSE TO AMBASSADOR'S QUESTION ABOUT AUSTRALIAN VIEWS ON PT, MALIK SAID AUSTRALIA IS AWARE INDONESIA WOULD PREFER INDEPENDENT STATE IN PT, IF CHANGE OCCURS, AND THAT AUSTRALIA'S PRIMARY CONCERN IS THAT PT DOES NOT BECOME THREAT TO SECURITY IN REGION. IN THIS CONNECTION, MALIK SAID GOI IS ENSURING THAT FUTURE STATUS OF PT DOES NOT PERMIT USE OF AREA FOR INFILTRATION OF INDONESIA BY SUBVERSIVE "CHINESE" ELEMENTS, POSSIBLY THROUGH MACAO.

5. COMMENT: EMBASSY HAS BEEN AWARE THAT GOI, WHICH HAS TRADITIONALLY AVOIDED ANTI-COLONIAL ATTACKS ON PORTUGUESE

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CONTROL OF PT, IS UNENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT ANY CHANGE THERE. BUT MALIK'S COMMENTS ARE FIRST INDICATION THAT INDONESIA MIGHT ACTUALLY OPPOSE MERGER OF COLONY WITH INDONESIA IF PORTUGAL FOLLOWS THROUGH WITH POLICY OF SELF DETERMINATION THERE. EMBASSY HAS HEARD FROM OTHER GOI SOURCES THAT, ON THE CONTRARY, GOI SECURITY LEADERS BELIEVE THAT IF PORTUGAL WITHDRAWS FROM PT, MERGER WOULD BE ESSENTIAL TO AVOID POTENTIAL SECURITY THREAT IN AREA. THESE

SOURCES INDICATE CONCERN THAT REFERENDUM MIGHT BE HELD
IN PT BEFORE GOI WOULD HAVE TIME TO INFLUENCE RESULT
TOWARD MERGER, OR WORSE, THAT PORTUGAL MIGHT SKIP REFER-
ENDUM AND CEDE COLONY TO HOSTILE TIMORESE FACTION. WE
DOUBT, THEREFORE, THAT MALIK'S COMMENTS REPRESENT
DOMINANT VIEW IN CURRENT GOI POLICY THINKING ON PORTUGUESE
TIMOR.
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